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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 CONAKRY 000147

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR G/TIP AND DRL
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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [GV](#)

SUBJECT: SIERRA LEONE DIPLOMAT OFFERS NEW PERSPECTIVE ON ALLEGED
TRAFFICKING OF TEN CHILDREN FROM GUINEA

REF: A) CONAKRY 00090

B) CAZEAU/LEMAR 03/06/08 EMAIL STRING

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY. Per Reftel, four women were stopped near Forecariah in June 2007 for allegedly attempting to traffic ten children from Guinea to Sierra Leone. DCM discussed the incident during a meeting with ALhaji ALie Badara Kamara of the Sierra Leonean Embassy in Guinea on April 15, 2008. Mr. Kamara provided a new perspective on the situation, insisting that this was not a trafficking case and that the Prefect in Forecariah was using the children as a ploy to raise funds for her orphanage. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) Mr. Kamara told DCM that one of the women arrested for trafficking had been in Guinea for her daughter's wedding and to visit with Sierra Leonean relatives living in Kamsar, Guinea. The relatives in Kamsar reportedly requested she take some of their children to live with relatives in Sierra Leone. The women were on their way to Sierra Leone with the ten children when they were stopped near Forecariah and arrested for trafficking. Mr. Kamara complained that without notifying their Embassy, the women were taken to a maximum security prison and treated like criminals.

NOT A TRAFFICKING CASE

¶3. (SBU) According to Mr. Kamara, the women were stopped in Forecariah because they did not have sufficient documentation. When asked, he admitted that the children were not registered with the Sierra Leonean Embassy in Guinea, but because the children were born to Sierra Leonean parents in Guinea, they were dual nationals. In an incident report sent to DCM by the Sierra Leonean Embassy earlier this year, the Sierra Leonean Government claimed that the children were in fact Sierra Leonean because they spoke Temne (a local dialect in Sierra Leone) and "identified warmly with other Sierra Leonean members of their family."

¶4. (SBU) Mr. Kamara stressed that the woman should have not been held for trafficking because she had received parental consent to take them to Sierra Leone. According to him, "it is only trafficking if they do not have consent of parents" and because nobody came forward saying their children were kidnapped, it could not have been a trafficking case. He also explained that the woman was a relative of the children so she should not have been charged with trafficking.

ACCUSATIONS OF CORRUPTION

¶5. (SBU) Mr. Kamara said he was very concerned that the children were put in protective custody of the Prefect in Forecariah, who in

turn placed the children in the orphanage she founded to help child victims of trafficking. Mr. Kamara said that the Prefect insisted the children were Guinean because she had a personal interest in the children being victims of trafficking. He accused the Prefect of using the children as a ploy to raise funds for her own orphanage and implied that the Prefect was corrupt.

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE CHILDREN?

¶6. (SBU) DCM inquired as to what happened to the children after they were turned over to the Sierra Leonean Embassy in January 2008 (reftel). Mr. Kamara said that the children were accompanied to Freetown by the Sierra Leonean Embassy where they held a press conference regarding the children. When Poloff asked what happened to the children after the press conference, Mr. Kamara replied that usually the Ministry of Social Affairs is responsible for taking the children directly to their families. However, in this case, the woman that was arrested for trafficking them was in Freetown and because she was a relative, she was authorized to take them to their families.

¶7. (SBU) Mr. Kamara seemed open to discussing the trafficking incident, possibly because he had a visa request to make at the end of the meeting. He appeared absolutely convinced that the case has nothing to do with trafficking and that the children are safe with their relatives in Sierra Leone. However, he contradicted himself several times during the discussion. He began by calling the woman the children's grandmother, and then later said she was not the grandmother of all ten children but a relative. When pressed further, he admitted that they were not related, but that she was from their same village so she knew the children's relatives.

CONAKRY 00000147 002 OF 002

COMMENT

¶8. (SBU) Embassy has a strong relationship with the Prefect in Forecariah, who is well known within the government and the international community for her integrity and efforts to combat trafficking. The Sierra Leonean Diplomat's perspective on this case highlights the complexity of trafficking issues in the region. While the children may have been dual national and had relatives in both countries, the intent of the women transporting the children is unknown. There are many elements to this specific case that suggest it is not as straightforward as Mr. Kamara described it. For example, the children were reportedly naked when they were trying to cross the border, and were later terrified when they found out they were being returned to the women's custody, according to local accounts. Unfortunately, this now appears to be a closed case from the perspective of the Guinean Government and the Sierra Leonean Embassy in Guinea. END COMMENT.

CARTER